



**TESTIMONY
ELIZABETH GARA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CONNECTICUT WATER WORKS ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
MARCH 7, 2011**

RE: HB-5518, An Act Establishing a Statewide Water Use Plan

CWWA has long supported the creation of a statewide water use plan to help guide decisions about water allocation and management.

Connecticut must develop and implement a statewide water use plan to guide the state in making decisions about managing and allocating the state's water resources. Currently, responsibility for making decisions about the state's water resources is vested in four different state agencies, resulting in disjointed policies that fail to address the need for a comprehensive plan for water allocation and management.

In 2006, the legislature directed the Institute of Water Resources at the University of Connecticut to conduct a study of watershed basins to provide us with a better understanding of the science and data needed to make responsible water allocation decisions. Although the scope of the study was limited due to funding constraints, it was a good first step in moving toward a comprehensive water allocation and management plan.

In addition, in 2008, the legislature adopted legislation directing the Office of Policy and Management to undertake a study of several areas, including 1) compiling information from other reports or studies on water resources planning in the state; 2) performing an analysis of existing DEP, DPH, and DPUC statutes and regulations in areas of overlapping and conflicting or inefficient procedures; 3) reviewing other states' regulatory programs and structure relating to water resource planning, including their approaches to water allocation; 4) identifying funding requirements and mechanisms for ongoing efforts in water resources planning in the state. These efforts continue to be helpful in moving Connecticut forward with a statewide water use plan that properly balances competing demands on water resources.

But now, as the state struggles with decisions affecting water allocation because of pending stream flow regulations and climate change issues, it is critical that we make the development of a statewide water use plan a top priority. A statewide water use plan will ensure that critical water management decisions are based on objective data, science and

knowledge. This will help us develop and implement water allocation policies that are balanced and do not undermine the public health, safety and economic development needs of the state. Without a comprehensive state-wide water policy, we will continue to struggle to move forward with balanced regulations affecting stream flow and water use.

In the last three decades, there have been several studies which have concluded that Connecticut must move forward with a long range water resources plan and adopt a functional means of allocating resources. Most recently, in 2003, the legislature's Program Review & Investigations Committee recommended that the Water Planning Council be required to move forward with long-range water resource planning and that the plan be approved by a unanimous vote of the Council. The Water Planning Council is comprised of representatives of DEP, the state Department of Public Health, the state Department of Public Utility Control and the Office of Policy and Management, all of which have cognizance of water resource issues. This recommendation recognized that no one agency should be in a position to exert undue influence over the outcome of a long-range plan. (*Legislative Program Review & Investigations, Streamflow Study, December 2003*)

Moreover, Program Review also recommended that CGS Section 25-33o be amended to require the Water Planning Council to develop and implement a structured approach for water resource planning and allocation, and that the Council collectively identify goals and apportion water among users. Again, Program Review clearly recognized that decisions made regarding the use of the state's water resources must be balanced among competing regulatory priorities and viewpoints.

Recognizing that the Governor has proposed the consolidation of DEP and DPUC and new commissioners are in the process of being appointed and confirmed, we understand that this may not be the appropriate time to pursue this legislation. However, we look forward to working with Rep. Mushinsky, the proponent of the bill, as well as environmental stakeholders and public officials in the near future to build on the positive steps Connecticut has taken to develop a statewide water use plan.